In Case You Don't Live Forever

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In Case You Don't Live Forever

by LunaTheLittleDragon

Summary

Mary Anne has fallen in love way too quickly and is now unsure what to do. She needs to tell Chance while she still can which, with all the banditing, is not a certain timeframe.

She can't bring herself to say the words out loud and so, decides to collect her thoughts in a diary. Over the course of a few months words turn into a poem and that poem into a song.

Will she ever be able to get out all the things she wants to say? Of course she will. After all, Mary Anne does deserve to sweep someone off their feet once in a while, don't you think?

Prologue

Chapter Summary

This story begins where the one you know ended.

Chapter Notes

It's actually happening! I can't believe I'm finally posting this. This fic is my first multichapter story and the first time I've participated in a fandom bang so this is all very exciting.

Thank you first of all to both Fafsernir and justafewthingstosay, my kind and wonderful betas. Thank you for your endless encouragement, willingness to listen to me ramble, funny comments on the google doc, comma aid, and all the sprint writing we did together. Without you this would probably not have gotten done in time and it also would been a lot less nice overall. They both wrote great stories for this bang you should definitely check them out.

And the second thanks is of course to jaden-mangrum, the wonderful artist I was lucky enough to be partnered with! You have been a dream to work with over the course of this. You were easy to talk to, cooperative, forgiving of my antics, generally helpful, and produced two very beautiful pieces of art. Everyone go give him some love he's great!

Writing a story about Chance and Mary Anne has been amazing. It's rare for me to get excited about wlw ships because almost all the media I consume either just barely has female characters and the ones they do have tend to not have great romantic chemistry.

So when I, as a female baby queer, listened to this one episode of two women falling in love I really felt represented. This wasn't something I ever realised I was missing since I do read a lot of queer romance but in hindsight most of that is mlm fanfiction. Which I still love and I think it's great that there is so much of it but this story felt so different in a way that I really hadn't expected.

I was introduced to the song by justafewthingstosay while I was trying to think of a concept for what I could write for the mini-bang, imagined Mary Anne singing it to Chance, cried, and the

rest is history.

Okay that was enough rambling.
For now, turn your attention to the Wild West, where two women, a young boy, and three horses are standing next to two bodies of varying aliveness.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What about the other horses?”

The two women jumped apart a little and looked at Billy as if they had forgotten he was there.

“I’m just saying. There are three horses here. Wouldn’t it be a little unfair to make all of us ride only on Moonshine?”

Chance smiled sheepishly. The boy was right. The brown horse Mary Anne had ridden to the rescue was standing only a few meters away and Joe’s black mare, that had bolted at the high tension and gunshots, was slowly trotting back to them.

“The boy is right, Miss Mary Anne,” Chance said and took her hand to lead her in the direction of the approaching horse. “This is Midnight. She’s from the same stock as my Moonshine. A good horse. Do you think you might want to do the honours and take better care of her than Nix no doubt did?”

Mary Anne looked at the animal in front of her with its long legs, big strong muscles and shining black coat. Midnight was not a small horse. With a raised head she would tower over Mary Anne completely. But she wasn't scared. The horse had gentle eyes and was carefully breathing on her hand.

"Well, she does seem like a sensible enough mare. And I couldn't possibly leave her here all by herself…." Who was she kidding? She had basically fallen in love with Midnight in about three seconds. Really. What was it with her and- nevermind.

"Glad to hear it, Miss. And we really should get going now before your fiance over there wakes up and causes more trouble."

Mary Anne made a short face of disgust before catching herself. “Yes. Let’s. I am quite glad today that I’ve been taught to ride so early.”

Chance smiled. “Have you now?”

“Oh yes! My mother wouldn’t have had it any other way. In this kind of land not knowing how to ride a horse could get you in real trouble.”

“That, it most definitely could. Speaking of trouble. That sheriff’s gun did quite the number on my leg…”

And it had. They had to coax Moonshine into lying down to get Chance on his back and even once she was up anything faster than a slow trot turned her from just a pained face and occasional hiss into outright groans of pain.

So slow and steady they made their way back. Billy was sitting high on the brown horse with Mary Anne holding both his and Midnight’s reigns.

Their ride was accompanied by idle chatter. Billy was a curious child and Mary Anne was nothing if not glad to indulge curiosity. Then again, even the most curious of boys grows tired at some point so when the stream of questions started to slow a little she instead turned over to Chance.

The woman had her eyes closed and hands propped on Moonshine’s shoulders. She was more sitting on her horse than riding it but Moonshine knew the way.

Chance was obviously in pain but she did not complain. As Billy had said: She was brave. It made Mary Anne think.

All the years she had spent with Beau, growing up with him, rolling her eyes at his attempts to woo her, letting him kiss her and propose to her… she had never felt anything close to what she felt right now. Two days after meeting this no good low down thieving killing bandit she felt more attracted to her than she ever had to anyone else in her life.

Kissing Chance had felt so different. Mary Anne thought she knew what love was. She had been engaged, for crying out loud. But… nothing Beau had ever done had made her feel anything close to that moment when she had kissed Chance Sequoyah.

Chance was just. She was a dirty criminal; a frankly dangerous outlaw but… for every moment she had made Mary Anne scoff there were five more where she made her heart beat faster.

She was a thief and a bandit. She had probably stolen everything she

“owned” including the children and Mary Anne herself but… after they had arrived she had never held her there by force. She had tricked her, sure. With a bed and food and a room full of children but she had not locked her in.

She had pointed Mary Anne in the right direction and offered her her horse. She had touched her hand and looked at her with a kind of look Mary Anne knew better than she wanted to but she had also listened to her. She had let her go, apologised. She had promised not to ever touch her without her say-so. Beau had never promised such a thing and the thought made something cold settle deep in her chest.

Even though they had only known each other for this short while, Mary Anne felt safe with Chance. She worried for her. She was willing to ride out in the wilderness armed with only a frying pan to save her. This woman, this improper impossible woman made something light up inside of her that made the good and sensible Miss Mary Anne turn into the kind of person that hit their fiancé over the head with a pan and kissed another woman.

It was terrifying and yet Mary Anne had never felt less scared. And as her gaze flicked between the injured bandit and the house growing closer in the distance she thought back on her favourite romance novels and wondered if maybe this was what love felt like.

It wasn’t easy. The second they came close to the house there were children everywhere, all of them excited and worried and curious and Mary Anne knew how much Chance loved them but she could also see that there was no way she could deal with them in her current state.

So, instead, Mary Anne made a spectacle of introducing Midnight and the brown one and gave the children the incredibly important task of tacking down all three of the horses.

It had taken a miracle and a half to get Chance off of her horse. And even when they managed, it was accompanied by a short sharp yell from the bandit and much concern from the children.

“Is she going to die?”

“Chance, Chance, are you okay? You’re going to be okay, right?

You're always okay."

"You're being very, very brave."

A few looked close to tears.

"Now, now, children. Calm down it will all be alright. Just a small little bullet wound, she is going to be fine. I just need a moment to dress the wound. I know what to do, don't you worry. Just take care of the horses now," Mary Anne did her most convincing smile and started to haul Chance inside.

The bandit was leaning heavily on her to avoid putting weight on the injured leg and she was so so SO close. She had an arm tight around Mary Anne's shoulders who in turn had one around Chance's waist and why was her heart beating so fast she had a job to do for goodness' sake!

So instead of focussing on whatever her pesky heart was doing Mary Anne sat Chance down on the nearest chair from the door and went to get medical supplies.

She hated this. She hated how quiet Chance was being. How the pain seemed to burn the humour out of her eyes, how the blood was seeping through the leg of what she had said to be her only pair of pants.

Getting the pants off wasn't fun with how much every movement hurt Chance and digging a bullet out of a new friend's leg was probably contesting for the worst experience of Mary Anne's life.

But she did it. She knew all the basics of how to treat a bullet wound. She had asked her hometown's doctor for it when it became obvious that Beau would be becoming a Sheriff. She cleaned and dressed the wound and after Chance had had a moment to breathe they got her up and to her actual bed.

It was a chaotic evening. Chance had been lucid enough to smile and thank her for her excellent bedside manners but exhaustion had taken her to sleep quickly after that.

And that left Mary Anne to deal with everything left to do by herself. She tidied away all the things she had used to treat Chance and went outside to check on the children. They had done their task quite well, she had to say. All horses were rid of their saddles and bridles and the children were now taking turns brushing and petting them.

What followed was a long evening of trying to console a whole class of children that saw her as a stranger and trying to care for them in a house which she didn't quite know her way around yet.

Mary Anne knocked and, when no answer came, simply decided to come in. She doubted an orphan bandit would start lecturing her on her manners.

She was just bringing Chance some food. It had taken quite a bit longer than expected to get the children into bed. Long enough that by the time she managed it, she had to reheat a portion.

Chance was still asleep. So much for the reheating.

Mary Anne set down the chipped plate on a slightly leaning side table.

She should probably wake Chance, but she couldn't quite bring herself to do so. Mary Anne was feeling exhausted to her bones and, with the wound, it had to be even more pronounced for Chance. So instead she just smiled and left the bandit to go to sleep herself.

Chapter End Notes

> STAY TUNED FOR DIARY ENTRIES AND ART IN CHAPTER TWO! That is obnoxious I'm sorry
>
> A fun fact about the horse thing: While making fun of the podcast forgetting Midnight and the Brown Horse, I promptly forgot about the brown horse as well and had Mary Anne walk the way back at first!
>
> Thank you to Janne for pointing that out. This is why having a beta is great.
>
> I am a baby writer and need comments and feedback to grow big and strong. Tell me what you think!

The Writer

Chapter Summary

> Mary Anne finds an empty notebook and decides to write a diary. This will result in the first few lines of poetry with many more to come.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Considering the fact that none of its original inhabitants could read, there were a lot of books in this house, Mary Anne thought.

She had started to take a look at the collection, to figure out which books would be good to give to which children once they could read them, and was probably more surprised than she should have been when, among the random assortment of wildly differing literature, she found a few surprisingly nice notebooks.

Well. Might as well.

> Dear Diary,
>
> I feel somewhat silly writing a diary like a schoolgirl but my life did take quite an interesting turn lately and I wanted to somewhat collect my thoughts. You see, I am a bandit now. I live with one, at least.
>
> Her name is Chance Sequoyah and she has about a million children. Well, sixteen, but it might as well be a million. Good lord, they can be a handful.
>
> Chance is wonderful. She is the best person I have met in my life.. I tried to hate her at first, to be completely honest. I really did. But she is strong and brave and charming and she makes me brave.

My life has never been this exciting and I don't think I ever want to go back.

What else can I tell you about Chance? She is a half-blood orphan and earns her living by stealing, cheating and whatever else bandits do. She is brash, improper, rude, uneducated, and if my poor mother knew this was the kind of person I chose to spend my time with, she would lose her mind.

But if I'm being honest, and isn't writing a diary the place to be just that, I don't mind any of it. Chance Sequoyah is kind. She is respectful. Despite all the ways people have failed her and been cruel to her, she has not let that make her turn to cruelty herself.

Besides the banditing, I suppose. But even there, cruel is not the way I would describe her.

I am stalling. This is not the problem I was trying to collect my thoughts over. Chance… Chance herself is not the direct problem here. The fact that I have fallen in love with a bandit is.

And it's not even a problem for the right reasons, if I'm being honest.

I am terrified. Seeing her wounded is terrifying and while she is healing and should be fine (she's even walking again by now) I can't help but worry.

If that bullet had hit her anywhere else, if any of the things that caused all her scars had been just a little deeper, just a little bit more on the wrong spot... Christ, not to even speak of infection and sickness and malnourishment...

It feels like any moment might be the last time I see her. She's not gonna live forever, I know that. But. There are things I need her to know before the time she does have is up.

Gosh, how to put this… See, that's the problem! I have no words to put to what I'm feeling and I feel like I won't know I'm running out of time to say them until it's too late.

I mean, how would that conversation even go?

"Hey, Chance, do you have a moment? I just wanted to say, in

case you don’t live forever, that I love you a whole lot, maybe?”

"Let me tell you something. I love you more than you’ll ever wrap your head around.”

Mary Anne looked at the wet ink on the page and sighed. That was terrible. And even writing it down without saying any part out loud had filled her chest with a cold sense of dread that she couldn’t quite explain.

She would never be able to say that to Chance. Maybe if she worded it a little differently… Maybe as a poem. Poetry was a way people expressed their feelings all the time, right?

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you that now

I love you more than you'll ever wrap your head around

Just In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth

What truth? What do I want to tell her??

We, we've only got so much time

I'm pretty sure it would kill me

If you didn't know…

You’re the only person that has ever made me feel this

You turn my life upside down

You make me do things that almost make me afraid of myself

There is nothing I fear when I'm with you

You make me

You are

Oh, the poor pages, Mary Anne thought. She did try to be neat with her notes but it never seemed to turn out that way.

How am I supposed to let her know when I don't know myself?

I do apologise for all the crossings out, dear diary. But this does somewhat prove exactly what my problem is. I just simply can't find the words to say.

It seems like it will take more than one evening to solve this little problem but there are quite a few pages left in you, so I am not overly worried.

At least I don't quite have nothing to show for my efforts. Even if it's just a few lines of poetry.

Maybe I will figure this out and manage to finish the poem. At some point. Hopefully soon enough.

You will hear from me soon, dear diary.

Love,

Mary Anne

She tried not to feel too disappointed as she blew on the page to dry the ink, closed the notebook and put it high on a cupboard the children couldn't reach and Chance, judging by the dust, wouldn't care to look on. Just because she didn't solve this immediately didn't mean it was unsolvable. For now, it was time to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Look! It's the first piece of art! There are so many little details that I love about it. If you like it too you can go to jaden-mangrum and tell him how great he is (you totally should he's a really nice guy).

I'll see you in a few days for the next chapter!

The Teacher

Chapter Summary

Mary Anne is soft over being a teacher.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dear Diary,

It's been a while since I've talked to you. I've been adjusting to my new life here.

Chance is almost fully healed. The wound did not get infected, thank God, and she isn't limping at all any more. In a bit of time all that will be left of the wound are a faded scar and bad memories.

At some point she dragged me outside to teach me how to shoot a gun. I was, still am to be honest, a little horrified at the prospect but she did not let herself be argued with. She said if I ever ended up riding to her rescue again, I might need a little more than a frying pan. She does have a point, sadly.

Life in the Wild West is dangerous, even more so now, with the sheriff and military against instead of behind us. I don't want to think about this. I am so terrified of someone coming after Chance thinking she is just as bad a bandit as someone like Nix and… and her ending up like him.

Mary Anne set down her pen with a shaking hand before she could cause any unfortunate ink splotches and wiped the tears from her eyes.

I shouldn’t dwell on my anxieties too much. I have so many better, wonderful things to tell you. I am a teacher! Dear Diary, I, Mary Anne Watkins, am the teacher of a wonderful class of young students yet again. Oh, how I’ve missed this!

Truly, I have never been more happy to be kidnapped. Not that I have been kidnapped before but that is besides the point. I am miraculously back to fulfilling my calling!

It’s something new though, definitely. My students are children of all ages and a stupidly handsome no-good bandit and they mostly don’t even know the alphabet. I have to slowly build up all the groundwork myself but that is more than fine.

They are very bright. All of them. They have learned how to count to twenty already and Lea was the first to memorise all the letters. The others, not to be outdone, followed suit quickly enough. I could not be prouder. They learn so quickly! Even Anton. Chance was worried he was too simple to learn on account of how he doesn’t even speak but sure as day he gave me a paper with the whole alphabet just after Lea managed hers.

Children are so wonderful! I hope with my teachings I can give them the tools they need to lead good fulfilling lives when they are older.

In the few weeks I have lived here I have been the happiest I was in a long time. I thought I might never get to work again, but instead I have a full class to teach and I don't even have to worry about any parents being bad to them or taking them out too early.

These children truly have a shot at life and I could not be prouder.

Love,

Mary Anne

PS:

Good lord, do they play a lot of tag. I have never felt my age quite as much as I did today just after lunch. Oh, to be seven years old again. My legs may never recover.

Oh, and I almost forgot! PPS, I suppose:

I have been thinking a bit about my poem and Chance and the children. Working in this orphanage is a dream come true in a way I could not have anticipated and I have Chance to thank for it. So I want to include that in the poem.

Here's a few more lines that I've thought of:

You put all your faith in my dreams

You gave me the world that I wanted

What did I do to deserve you?

I follow your steps with my feet

I walk on the road that you started

Would you look at that? No crossings out to be seen! It's nice to make progress. I think I might just be able to finish this.

See you soon

Love,

Mary Anne

Chapter End Notes

This one is a bit of a short one but it's sweet.

The Fighter

Chapter Summary

Shit's going down!
Featuring: Mary Anne has a lot of feelings to go through concerning being okay with the gay.

CW: canon typical violence

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mary Anne was of the opinion that, with children, you should check in whenever there is even the slightest reason for concern. Showing up a million times when nothing truly bad is happening is always better than missing a single true emergency. So, when she heard a commotion that was definitely not play fighting or the usual excitement, she was off her chair and through the door almost immediately to investigate.

Rightfully so, as it turned out. The second she stepped out of the house, there were a dozen worried children chattering about horses on the horizon and if the man that shot Chance was coming back to shoot them too.

Mary Anne looked towards the point on the horizon that the many small hands were gesturing at and squinted.

Shit! Those were horses, indeed. More than one. But it didn't take much talent in deduction to know who it would be.

"Go inside, Children. Keep together and make sure no one is missing. Close all the doors and windows that you can and do not open them for anyone you don't know, you hear me?"

"But-"

"Go!"

She ushered whoever was within reach to the door and it seemed like they understood this was serious, because the group hurried inside and kept close to each other. There were the beginnings of tears in some of their eyes, but no time to soothe them. They were better crying and safe than the alternative. Where was Chance?

Stables. Always with the horses.

“Chance!”

They had a plan. Well, they didn’t, really. The plan was that the children could under no circumstances end up in danger and so they would go and ride as far away from the house as possible towards the danger and deal with everything somehow.

“Beau Richmond! There are children in that house! Sixteen wonderful children who have a bright future ahead of them and they need Chance to protect them and bring them food and clothing and toys and books no matter where it comes from and they need me to teach them so they can have the lives they deserve and they do NOT need some dim-wit from Springfield barging in and destroying everything they have just because he wants to play sheriff!

You stay away from here or, by God, I will put a second bullet into you and next time I won’t aim for just a hand! You hear me? And do not even dare to call me your wife! I have not and will never marry you! You-”

“Ma’am, I think he’s not listening to you no more on account of having passed out.”

“And don’t worry about us. We came here ‘cause the new sheriff told us he needed some boys to take down a bandit who kidnapped his wife. We didn’t come to bother a pair of ladies doing their best to run an orphanage.”

Dear diary,

Yesterday…

Yesterday was something. I can't decide if it was good or bad or what I should feel about it. I mostly still feel exhausted.

Beau came. Beau came with a bunch of local cowboys to kill Chance and get me back.

The children were playing outside and saw riders on the horizon. I heard them. I told them to go inside. I went to get Chance.

Neither of us knew what to do. We just knew that whatever would happen needed to happen as far away from the children as possible. So we got Moonshine and Midnight and two guns and went riding right at them.

We met them and before I could even try to say anything to him, Beau had his gun out and pointed at Chance and I… I couldn't. I couldn't let her get shot again. I couldn't let her die. Not when I still had not managed to say a single word of all the things I needed to say to her.

So I shot him first. I had my own gun in my hand before I had even really thought about it and his hand became one of the cans that Chance had taught me to shoot with and I pulled the trigger.

I shot him. I can't believe I shot him! And I didn't even regret it for a second. No, instead I laid into him about the children and how they needed me and Chance and about how I was not marrying him and I don't know how much he even heard of any of that because he passed out.

Maybe bloodloss, maybe shock, I don't know. But he passed out and the cowboys he brought started talking to us.

Chance was fully on alert and ready to fight them at first but they ended up not being any problem at all. They were in favour of the orphanage and apparently willing to overlook the bandit part, even promised to see if they'd be able to find some donations for the children while we heaved Beau onto his horse.

And then two of them looked at each other and then at us. And they kissed short and sweet to the rolling eyes and slight smile of the third one.

It made Chance relax a little and she nodded at them. I was honestly not really sure what to say at all so I just smiled and said nothing.

We introduced ourselves to each other. Their names are Nat McCabe, Eugene Talley, and Bill Pickett. The three of them, not just Nat and Eugene that had kissed, seemed very affectionate with each other to the point that I am somewhat confused concerning who the item is there. But they did all seem like very sweet people, at least.

A part of me believes I should be outraged at men being like that with each other but honestly? I am too tired for that. They're on our side regarding the children and that's all that matters to me. Besides. It's not like I much have a leg to stand on.

We were very lucky to have met them. I don't know what will happen with Beau. They said that he might not be able to stay sheriff with his hand in that condition, but they promised that no matter what they would make sure we will not be bothered.

And then they and the no-good sheriff went on their way back the way they came and Chance and I went riding back to the house as well.

It took a bit of reassuring the children that no one was hurt and the bad man would never come back because there are good men too that will keep him away but we got there.

Bringing them to bed was a lot less easy. And not all of them stayed there the whole night, but in the end everyone is alright.

There's something else that happened as well.

I spent the night in Chance's bed.

I don't quite remember how it happened but we both needed to not be alone, I think, so I just came and slept in her bed for a night.

It was the best and worst experience of my life and I don't think I want to ever leave again. We started out just lying next to each other. Not touching at all. And then our hands under the covers drifted closer and closer to the middle until they touched. And then she held mine in hers and I had to look away because I was blushing so much! And we fell asleep like that.

I woke up with her holding me in her arms. Dear diary, I have no need to go to heaven if it does not include Chance Sequoyah with her arms around me. I don't know how long I spent just lying there until she woke up. With my heart pounding and her breath against my neck, just being content and comfortable and so very in love.

There are many words that could be said about that moment, but I don't think I'm ready to say any of them out loud yet. Just writing what I just wrote is already a lot.

But I do have something else to add to my poem. Chance Sequoyah makes me brave. Just her presence and example make me strong and brave and capable of standing up for myself and for my family.

Am I horrified at shooting a man I used to call my fiancé in the hand without hesitation? Somewhat. Less than I should be maybe, because I would do it again in a heartbeat. If it's about these children, if it's about this life, if it's about her… I'm almost a little scared at what I seem to be capable of.

> I have a hero whenever I need one
>
> I just look up to you and I see one
>
> I'm who I am 'cause you taught me to be one

Love,

Mary Anne

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was a bit of a problem child. It's actually one of the last ones I wrote because ya gal has no idea how to plot. Thank you again to my artist and betas for being forgiving of my writer's block antics and helping me through it. They also each named a cowboy!

Yes, my solution to the Beau problem was gay polyamorous cowboys and I love them.

The Mute

Chapter Summary

Bad things happen.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dear Diary,

I'm sorry about the tears, I really am. It will mess up all the ink, I know, but I can't help it. I have done something terrible. I am a terrible woman to be with.

Let me explain. The last few months have been incredible. Running the orphanage really has become a steady routine.

There's waking up or being woken up by the children in the mornings. Making sure everyone is dressed and ready for the day, preparing food, classes, playing, reading, mending, cleaning. All sorts of things to do that could get overwhelming would I have to do them myself, but luckily the children and Chance do not leave me alone with them.

Oh and then there is Chance. Oh, Chance.

We have grown closer, her and I. Quiet evenings of talking about nothing and everything when the children are asleep, lying beneath the stars, the occasional kiss that will leave me blushing and ducking away because I can't handle the way my stomach seems to want to escape my body...

Chance and I have been flirting and dancing around each other and it has been terrifying and the best thing to ever happen to me. And now. Now I think I have broken that.

Let me explain.

We were talking a while back, as we always do when the children are asleep, and I must have mentioned how I used to play the piano in the small old church down at town square. I was mostly

wondering if I should turn her poem into a song and how I might go about that. I didn't think much about it at first.

But then.

See, yesterday Chance came back from, well, "work", I suppose. And she did not only bring the usual necessities and knick knacks but also a full gosh-darn standing piano! A piano! On a cart! She put Moonshine in front of a cart! To pull a piano! All the way to the house!

I couldn't believe my eyes. The children were also extremely intrigued and wanted to get all over it, but I made clear that it was a complicated and delicate instrument and not a toy to be mashing the keys of.

Moving the piano inside wasa bit of an ordeal, but once it was there I got to play! I didn't know if I would ever get to play again when I left home! It was an amazing feeling. The children could barely keep quiet and Chance was looking at me so softly I couldn't bear it.

And then the day continued in its usual rhythm. Over the course of it some of the children asked me to teach them a little bit of how to play it, which was also delightful. Oh, this was such a wonderful gift.

I want to end the memory of this day here. It's so warm and joyful and precious. I want to stop here and never move any way forward because, oh diary, I am terrified that I might never be able to go back.

But that's not how time progresses. No matter how I might wish in hindsight, that is not how today ended. I should continue.

After the children all went to sleep, I walked back to the beautiful new instrument that was now miraculously accessible for me. I have had pieces of a melody that might work to turn the poem into a song poem flying around in my head and wanted to try some of them out.

I sat down and played a few chords and hummed a few notes. It's nothing finished, not even close. Just a bit of idle experimentation while I was excited. And then Chance entered the room and I looked at her and fuck.

She set down her pen and clamped her eyes shut. The memory hurt. It had burned into her and it was still burning. She took a ragged breath, wiped away the forming tears and set her pen to the paper again.

She looked so open, so adoring, so gentle and vulnerable, and like she was looking through me and into my very soul and she liked what she saw.

I was terrified. Being kidnapped and the general danger of death did not scare me as much as the concept that she might love me.

And then she started to look kind of nervous and was fiddling with her hat that she was holding in her hand. And I was still so scared and she looked at me and she was nervous and blushing and stammering a little and I don't remember the words exactly.

But she stood before me and told me that she loves me. That she would love nothing more than for me to be her girl. That she would treat me right and cherish and love me because there's no one she respects as much as me.

And I didn't know what to say. Heaven and hell and anything in between be damned! The one time it mattered, I just sat there like a fool saying nothing and being afraid of having everything I've ever wanted.

And she must have seen something like that. Because, for a moment, she looked devastated.

And then she forced herself to smile and apologized and told me that, of course, if I wanted nothing more than for her to be a friend, that would be perfectly alright by her. That I wouldn't have to worry. Like she said before, she would never touch me without my say-so. And she apologised again for making me uncomfortable.

And then she left. I tried to call after her, but I don't think she

heard.

I think there were tears in her eyes. Oh no, what have I done? The one person I think I might truly love, she opens her heart to me and tells me in such wonderful words everything I've ever dreamed to hear from her and what do I do? I just sit there.

I don't even want to imagine how she must be hurting to lay herself bare and not even hear a word in return.

I have to fix this! I need to do better by her!

I have a good start on my poem; managed to find some words. I can find more. I will make this a song and I will play it to her and... I will just have to hope against hope that all that I have broken is not irreparable.

I might try to do this on a separate paper this time around. No need to make a mess of my diary again.

Aright!

This could actually work. I've written a song! It's not quite done yet, though. I'll have to work a little on the melody and I'm still missing that one line at the end of the chorus and also a proper last line to the whole song but I'm sure I can figure that out.

I've also incorporated today because that is definitely important.

A last line for the first verse:

> I need you to know that I heard you, every word

And directly after that a bridge:

> I've waited way too long to say
>
> Everything you mean to me

I really have, haven't I?

There's still one more part. The first half of the second verse:

I, I've carried this song in my mind

Listen, it's echoing in me

But I haven't helped you to hear it

That's good I think. That should work. God above, I am terrified.

It's way too late. I should have gone to sleep hours ago. I think I'll go now. I'm close to getting this done. I can feel it.

It's gonna be alright. It has to.

Love,

Mary Anne

Chapter End Notes

Angst has entered the chat.
Don't worry they'll talk it out.

This chapter was supposed to go up yesterday but I fucked up my schedule. I'm having a bit of a weird time health-wise.

BUT we're at the halfway point in chapters! I still kind of can't believe it. I hope you've liked what you read so far and I can't wait to share the rest with you. See you tomorrow!

Making Amends - Day 1

Chapter Summary

They talk.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dear Diary,

The last few days have not been easy. But the world has not ended.

I slept terribly the night of my last entry. Not only because I was so distraught and up so late, but also because I couldn't even have the comfort of sleeping with her next to me. I didn't have the right to that after how I hurt her.

So even though I wanted nothing more than to just curl up in her arms and forget about everything, I was lying awake in a cold and empty room that had never become familiar to me. I didn't sleep well.

And I woke up even worse because children have no care for when you go to bed. They are up at dawn and they will make sure you are too. It's one of the less delightful parts of this whole thing.

The day was not great. I was exhausted and still felt bad and so did Chance, who seemed to be not much better off in the sleep department than me.

Of course they all noticed. They could tell something happened. That something was not quite the same with Chance and me.

But we got through the day without upsetting anyone. And then it was bedtime for the children and all of a sudden there was no noise, no distractions, no questions or demands for food or playing or all the things children keep you on your toes with.

It was just Chance and me in a dimly lit living room, not quite

sure what to say to each other.

But we ended up talking anyway. We sat down close to each other. Not looking in each other's faces but close enough that we could feel the other was there.

And we talked. She is so wonderful. I love her so much, I don't know what to do with myself. We talked.

I apologised for hurting her. That she said the things she wanted to say so simply and beautifully and I am still struggling to say anything.

That sounds so coherent when I retell it like this but, in all honesty, I was a stuttering mess, all the words falling over each other. At some point, I just gave up and leaned over to hug her close, hoping she would at least understand I wasn't disgusted by her or whatever misinterpretation had brought those tears to her eyes the night before.

And I think she understood a little because she seemed to relax a bit. And she hugged me back and set her chin on the top of my head. We sat there for a while. Just her and me. And we talked.

About me and what I was feeling. I managed to tell her that I had words to say but couldn't get them out. That I've tried and tried to find them and I'm getting close but I'm not quite there.

How scared I am that I will lose her before I can tell her. But how much I still want this to get out right.

She just hugged me closer and told me it would all be okay. She was really worried she had scared me off or that I had felt insulted by what she had said. But it doesn't seem like that's it. And if all I need her to do is wait until I am ready to tell her then she can do that.

I love her so much, dear diary. I love her so much I don't know what to do with myself.

Our relationship feels like a shy fragile thing right now. But I fell asleep in her arms again today. So I think we can be alright.

Love,

Mary Anne

Chapter End Notes

This is so soft I love them so much

Making Amends - Day 2

Chapter Summary

Soft things.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dear Diary,

I love to teach so much! The children have gotten so far. They can count and do simple additions and subtractions and they know all the letters and can read and write (even if the speed and ease still varies).

I saw Chance sit on the floor with a small cluster of children looking over her shoulder, reading a book together. I almost cried.

I am so happy. I am so proud of all of them and I am so very glad I could do this for them.

These children have a real shot at life. They're going to be okay. I did that.

I talked to Chance again tonight. About how happy I am to be here and how good it is to see the children learn.

It made me laugh, but I just had to thank her for kidnapping me. If I had stayed on that train, I would have ended up in a town that didn't need me, where I would never have been anything more than "the sheriff's wife".

Instead, I am here. I do what I love and what is my calling. I can have a positive impact on so many young lives. I've never wanted anything more than this.

I feel like I matter. Not just as the extension of some man but as me. I matter. I did this.

And Chance held me close and told me how glad she was that I

was here. And how much the children and she needed someone like me.

She said that if I left there isn't a single person that could be what I am. Someone else might be able to teach the children if I decide I want to leave but they could never be exactly what I am.

Especially not to her.

Dear diary, I think it is incredibly unfair that she can just SAY things like that while I have after months still not managed to finish my song. I need to get on that.

Love,

Mary Anne

Chapter End Notes

Have a cute and wholesome short little chapter.
Mary Anne is starting to figure herself out. Good job, Mary Anne.

Making Amends - Day 3

Chapter Summary

Mary Anne learns some things

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dear Diary,

Bill came to visit today! The children were very distrustful at first, but once he promised he didn't have a gun with him and showed the things he brought they were all over him.

He had brought some quite nice wooden toys and a whole chunk of fabric to make or mend clothes with. The children didn't care much about anything that wasn't the toys, of course, but Chance and I were very glad to have something so very useful.

It was good that he showed up, I think. Even if he hadn't brought such nice things.

He had some news from around Crossroads. Beau had to take the train out of town to get to a doctor that would be able to properly care for his hand. Apparently, my bullet really did a number on it. So now the town's gonna have to deal with a little more time without a sheriff.

Though in this particular case that might not even be a bad thing.

He asked about the orphanage. How it came to be. How the children are treated. What they are taught. I had no problems answering any questions he had if it would mean we could have people on our side in this but Chance got defensive about the bandit part. She said she would do whatever it takes to keep these children taken care of, whether it is against the law or not.

He didn't have too much of a problem with it, surprisingly. He told us how Eugene, Nat, and he actually grew up without parents and met when they were taken in by the same ranch where they worked for their entire youth and that they now run together.

The family that owned it before didn't care for much more than some extra hands, when they took in three orphans. They didn't take very good care of the boys. And so the young boys didn't have much of anything besides each other.

But the owners' children all had no interest in farm life and all but one had left by the time the father of the family and owner of the ranch died. The youngest son, the only child still on the ranch at the time, took all the money he could find and left as soon as the funeral was over, to go become who knows what. And so Nat, Eugene and Bill inherited the ranch and have been running it ever since. On their own terms and with actually earning the fruits of their labour themselves.

He said that he and the others managed to get lucky. They found love and happiness that makes up for all the long years of hard, miserable work. But they got very very lucky, And most children in their situation are not.

So that's why they'll do whatever they can to help us. He said that even if most of the things in that house were not exactly honestly gained, every child that doesn't have to go through what they went through would be a good enough excuse to him.

He invited us to come by the ranch any time, if we needed to have some company that wasn't the children or each other, and then he left.

When Chance and I talked that night, she was actually the one to speak up first. She told me about her childhood.

She told me about all the memories that mirror what Bill told us today. Being alone. Being taken in. Being worked hard ruthlessly.

She talked about how unlike the three cowboys she did not have anyone to be close to. All the people around her saw her as nothing but a half blood brat.

She talked about sometimes wondering about who her parents were. She has no memory of them. Did they die? Did they abandon her? Were they in love? Or is she the product of an act of violence? There is no way for her to ever know.

She talked about her name. She didn't know why she was called

Chance. Maybe just because they needed something to call her and that was as good a name as any. They called her Sequoyah any time they wanted to stress her indian blood. Sequoyah was the first indian name they could think of and by being indian it was implied to be an insult.

She told me she refuses to let it be that. It is her name now, not an insult. If she is not insulted by it it cannot be an insult. It's an indian name and that's half her heritage so it fits, that's all.

She doesn't know who the original Sequoyah is. She never lived among the people whose blood make up half of hers. She said she never knows how to feel about that. Maybe it would have been easier among them. Maybe not. She does not know. She does not know who her people are.

She already told me most of the major things from there. Running away, begging, stealing, and then meeting Nix.

When Nix arrived in her life she had become rough and sharp and people looked down even on a girl that is rough and sharp almost more than a half blood. But she had stopped caring about what people thought long ago. And what a girl was supposed to be like never much mattered to her. What mattered was having something to eat and running was easier in pants so she never went back to dresses.

Nix, at the time, seemed like everything Chance wanted to be. He had money and no one dared to insult him. No one could tell him what to do. Chance wanted anything that wasn't the life she had been living and being rich and feared seemed like exactly that.

He didn't care if she wore pants or cursed or misbehaved. And she didn't have any higher standards than that.

She didn't want to tell me any details of the things she did with Nix. The only thing she was proud of was cheating him out of a lot of money and leaving him behind.

He had spent years teaching her to take what she wanted and so she did exactly that.

And while wondering what to do with all that money, she remembered how much she could have used this earlier in her life. It was enough to build a house. She wouldn't have had to live with people who berated her and worked her young body to the

bone.

She remembered a hundred different faces of children she had seen begging on the street or being worked as she had been. She said it felt like her own eyes were looking back at her from every single one of those children and it wasn't a choice at all. To build a place where they could be safe and to take them in. So they wouldn't have to live a single day more in conditions as she had lived in.

She didn't cry once during her telling but she sat close to me and let me hold her once I started to cry.

She had looked so lost with old bad memories clouding her eyes. And somehow, seeing her like that and hearing what she had told me, I managed to find some words.

I told her how amazing she was. How in awe I am of her, that life and people had been so cruel to her and yet she had come out on the other side not broken and bitter but strong and kind.

She got her hands on a lot of money and out of everything she could have done with it she decided to build an orphanage. She built this house with her own two hands! She found every single one of the children in it and took them in. And all throughout, for five years she has gone out and fought for what she built. She has done whatever was necessary so that she didn't have to turn away or lose a single child.

She amazes me and inspires me.

Now, that I'm writing all of this down, it really makes me think.

All my life I have been told that there are ways for a proper young woman to behave. Being quiet and pleasant and leaving the rough bits of life to someone else. That there were certain kinds of work a woman was expected to do and others that she should never even attempt.

I spent all my life biting my tongue, trying to be good, doing my

best to do all the things I was supposed to do and waiting for the happiness that I was promised would come.

I realised, as I was sitting there with Chance Sequoyah, as I ran the hand that shot a man through her hair, that maybe all those things I have been told aren't all right.

They're not all wrong either, though. I take pride in my ability to keep a house running. I take pride in caring for others. I take pride in teaching and raising children. I take pride in being pleasant and gentle and in loving my family.

But that is also not all I am. I am not only the extension of someone else. I want to stand up for myself. I don't want to have to grit my teeth and smile politely at people dismissing me. I want to yell "You're wrong!" and not let them call me hysteric. I want to stand up for myself and fight for my family and for myself!

If people say any of that makes me less of a woman then I don't believe I want to listen to them any more.

I want to run over dusty ground without worrying for the hem of my skirt. What are a few stains that can be washed out compared to the pure joy of the moment? What is being polite and proper compared to keeping the things I hold dear?

This new life is what I have grown to love. These children, this house, all of it. Whatever it takes to keep it will be worth it. If there is no other way than banditry then that is just what it is going to take.

I am done with following other people's opinions of what is right and wrong. What is right is for these children to have a proper childhood. What is right is for me to be who I want to be and act how I want to act without fear of the judgement of people far in my past.

I am Mary Anne Watkins and I am a no-good bandit with about a million children. Well, sixteen.

Love,

Mary Anne

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy this was a lot of last minute additions. I hope there's not too much wrong with them, seeing that they're fully un-betaed.

As always: The comments are open for you to tell me all your thoughts.

Making Amends - Day 4

Chapter Summary

Fucking finally!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dear Diary,

Chance and I did not talk much tonight. But we didn't have to. We were simply sitting together in companionable silence the whole night. It was so easy to lean on her. To be close to her and feel her warmth and run my fingers through her soft hair.

And she was the same way with me. She put her arm around me, pulled me tight and held me close, leaning her head on mine. At some point she kissed the top of my head and I looked up to look into her eyes. And I took her face in my hands.

She was so beautiful. Her eyes were open and her pupils blown and she was breathing almost like she couldn't breathe at all and I…

I just had to kiss her.

It was so good. Her lips are so soft and with her arms around me I felt so safe and it was just *good* . I don't remember who told me what to ever make me fear this but I will never forgive them. I have never felt more right. I have never been more happy.

I love her so much. And she must have tasted that on my lips or I must have felt it so strongly that she could hear it. Because when we broke apart and looked into each other's eyes she asked me in a soft voice: "Can you say it please?"

"I will. I'm not going anywhere and I will, I promise you. Can you be patient for a few more days?"

"If you'll kiss me again?"

And I did.

Love,

Mary Anne

P.S.:

My lord, I got so caught up in the romance of it all that I forgot to tell you the final piece of song lyrics I now have!

It’s the last lines. Literally.

A last line for the chorus:

I'm everything that I am because of you

And a last line for the song:

As long as I'm here as I am, so are you

I have changed and grown so much. I think I am so fully and purely myself right now as I have never been before in my life. And all of that I have her to thank for. I will carry a piece of her with me for the rest of my life.

Now to get to practicing this so I can play it without stumbling.

Love,

Mary Anne

Chapter End Notes

This is so soft.
The song is finished! Only one chapter to go. Can you imagine?

This has been such an exciting project to work on I cant believe it's almost over after so long. I had a lot of fun plotting this out, cutting the song into sections and giving her a reason to write them.
And of course writing the soft lesbian content I crave.

In two short days I will upload the final chapter. Get ready for a second amazing piece of art at the end!

Mrs. Mary Anne

Chapter Summary

Mary Anne is going to actually say some things! Or sing them more like.

Chapter Notes

It's the last chapter!

I hightly recommend listening along to the song: "In Case You Don't Live Forever" by Ben Platt

That link is the original version which I personally think is musically and emotionally the best out there but if you want a female singer I found a few covers that you can find in the endnotes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Am I going to actually see you tonight or am I banished from being within earshot of the piano again? I’ve started to almost miss you.”

“There are some things that just need practice, my dear. There was no way around it. Now just sit or stand or whatever you like right over there. I think I’ve got it. So I want you very much within earshot of the piano for this. I… I have some things to say.”

“You’re going to say it?”

“Yes! I said I would, didn’t I? Just. Uhm. Yes.”

Mary Anne sat down at the piano. She had never been so nervous in her life. Not when first playing for the church, not when leaving home, not when she was being kidnapped by someone that, back then, was simply an armed and very peculiar bandit.

But Chance had stopped being only that in a long time. And she would be so much more very soon. Hopefully, at least.

She cleared her throat, took a deep breath, and began to play .

“You put all your faith in my dreams

You gave me the world that I wanted

What did I do to deserve you?

I follow your steps with my feet

I walk on the road that you started

I need you to know that I heard you, every word

I've waited way too long to say

Everything you mean to me

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you now

I love you more than you'll ever wrap your head around

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth

I'm everything that I am because of you

I, I've carried this song in my mind

Listen, it's echoing in me

But I haven't helped you to hear it

We, we've only got so much time

I'm pretty sure it would kill me

If you didn't know the pieces of me are pieces of you

I've waited way too long to say

Everything you mean to me

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you now

I love you more than you'll ever wrap your head around

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth

I'm everything that I am because of you

I have a hero whenever I need one

I just look up to you and I see one

I'm who I am 'cause you taught me to be one

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you now

I love you more than you'll ever wrap your head around

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth

I'm everything that I am

Whoa... whoa...

In case you don't live forever, let me tell you the truth

As long as I'm here as I am, so are you."

Chance Sequoyah was staring at her with her mouth open and a blush on her cheeks. She seemed stunned into silence, completely caught off guard, and... well. Somewhat swept off her feet, as Mary Anne couldn't help but smugly notice.

After a few moments, Chance shook herself and opened and closed her mouth a few times, seemingly unable to find any words to say. In the end, she simply chuckled and smiled warmly at her girl still sitting at the piano.

"Why, Miss Mary Anne, I had no idea you could make music like that!" Her voice was soft and a lot quieter than Mary Anne was used to

hearing it. "I don't know what to say."

Mary Anne stood up and walked over until she was standing right in front of her. She was blushing as well but soldiering through it. With a look that was equal parts love and determination she grabbed Chance's hand and looked her in the eyes.

"I had been hoping to... Well. What I'm trying to say is that I love you very much, you no-good bandit." They both laughed a bit before Mary Anne collected herself and continued.

"And I wouldn't mind being Mrs. Mary Anne. If you would have me."

“Yes!”

Chapter End Notes

Female Covers I thought might fit:

- Reagan & Lucas (very good singing and pretty good audio quality, I have really no problems. She says "I am a woman" where I put "I'm who I am" but shhh)
- Alana Demler (Untrained but very beautiful voice, pretty good

audio quality for a church recital, guitar additionally to the piano, uses the original Platt lyrics)
- Liisi LaFontaine (skip to 00:24, live so the audio isn’t perfect especially in the beginning, has a full band playing, her lyrics are the ones I use in the fic, she has a lot of emotion)

It's done! It's actually done and posted I can't believe it.

Do you see that art? It's great, isn't it? If you want to you can go and reblog Jaden's post on tumblr right here. Go give him some love, people, he did so good!

I think I've given all the thanks I need to in the beginning already and they still hold true 100%. The only thing still left to say is that I would also like to thank everyone who read my story. This is a small fandom so I don't expect there to be too many but that makes me all the more glad for anyone this does reach. Feel free to say hi in the comments and I will see you hopefully somewhat soon. I don't think this is the last story I will write about these two.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!